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DON ESTEVAN'S HONOR.

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It was held in keeping by a viking of the South and by another whom he brought over the sea.

CHAPTER I.

THE COMING OF THE SHIPS.

"HOLA! The ships are coming in! Wake, town of sleepy women, my lord is back! *Holà!*"

The fresh boyish voice rang like a shrill trumpet through the quiet street. The babies at play looked up wonderingly; the doors and windows of the low, massive stone houses filled suddenly with eager faces.

"Really, Juan? It is no jest?" called a girl, leaning out regardless of her floating hair.

"Really, Emilia!" mimicked the boy breathlessly. "But braid your locks before Diaz comes ashore, or he will think you have torn them with grief ever since he left."

A burst of laughter from the listeners greeted the sally and drove the girl within.

"Whither are you running, Juanito?" demanded a stout woman, putting out her hand to stop him as he passed.

"To the castle, Señora Maria, to claim the gold piece Don Estevan offered the man who first saw the ships." He eluded her grasp nimbly, and sped on. "*Holà!* The ships are in!"

A wave of excitement and pleasure ran with him—the tumult of an awaking town. The women hurried into holiday gowns; the rosy children were swept within and hastily washed and tidied. In fifteen minutes the village had begun to empty itself into the streets that led to the wharf. Rocaverde was an island scarcely twenty-five miles long, and less than that in width, but when it turned out to greet its lord and his returning men the din was worthy a metropolis.

The boy ran on to the graystone castle that stood behind and above the town. The soldiers lounging before the gates turned to watch his approach, and waved ironical encouragement.

"I have a message for Don Estevan!" he cried. "Let me in!"

The guard laughed lazily, and a man descending the steps stopped, staring at the dusty, sunburnt herald.

"A message for Don Estevan?" he repeated. "From whom?"

"My lord is come; the ships are in the bay, *señor*," stammered Juan. "Don Estevan promised a ducat to the one who saw them first; pray let me pass."

The man paled and hesitated.

"I will tell him," he said.

"But the ducat—" objected Juan.

The other impatiently drew forth the coin and flung it to him. "There. Go; leave me in peace."

The boy pounced on it swiftly, and looked after the retreating figure.

"I wonder why it is worth a golden ducat to Pedro Mirando to tell Don Estevan the ships are home?" he remarked reflectively.

"Don Estevan will give it back to him," suggested a soldier, with faint interest.

Juan made a gesture of denial.

"Not *that* way. But—" He threw back his head and sent the call ringing out again as he turned toward the village.

"*Holà!* The ships are in!"

The man called Mirando climbed the steps, setting his foot carefully on each stair, as if the semitropical sun had made him giddy. He went slowly back to the room he had left a few moments before.

"Don Estevan," he said, pausing at the threshold.

The apartment into which he looked was a glowing study of varying tints of blue, ranging from the pale-sapphire glass that filled the arching windows to the deep violet of velvet cushions and hangings and the subdued purple-black of Oriental rugs. In the azure light Estevan de Lucena hardly seemed his twenty-five years as he glanced up inquiringly, pushing the fair waving hair back from his forehead.

"What is it, Mirando?" he asked.

"The ships are coming in," the other stated quietly.

Estevan sprang to his feet.

"The ships! At last!" he cried joyously. "Tell the others, Mirando; bid them make ready to come to the wharf. And send word to Doña Soledad; no, I will see her myself. Hurry! Don Luís must not find an empty shore."

Mirando regarded him without moving.

"Gonsalvo, *señor?*" he asked.

The young noble raised his eyebrows.

"Gonsalvo was my friend once, Don Estevan. Give him one more chance; see him before my lord arrives."

"It is too late," protested Estevan.

"*Señor,* if you could tell my lord that Gonsalvo had confessed it would help much. My lord loves you—he who loves nothing else on earth; if *you* asked, he would be content to banish Gonsalvo from Rocaverde."

Estevan met the man's keen, hard eyes with some impatience.

"But he will not confess, Mirando. I have seen him often in the last month."

"Not when my lord was at the gates, *señor,*" he urged. "You have seen my lord in his anger, as have we; can even Gonsalvo face that?"

"Very well," yielded Estevan reluctantly. "Go do my errands, then. Make haste, Mirando; it will not do to have Don Luís wait."

But in spite of the injunction, Estevan himself lingered after the other had gone, listening to the excitement which rose in the castle as it had done in the village. Very tenderly he glanced at the line of sea which was visible from the window as finally he turned to go.

Mirando, watching in the hall below, spoke to a white-haired officer when he heard the door close.

"We are to go on, Don Ruy; I think Don Estevan is paying a secret visit to the prisoner."

Ruy de la Vega looked up quickly and caught a glimpse of the passing figure. He shrugged his shoulders, and went on without remark, but his lined face was rigid with disapproval.

When the party from the castle reached the wharf, half an hour later, the four great ships had come to anchor and were furling their wings like weary sea-birds as they floated in their own bay. One small boat had already started for shore. In it sat Don Luís de Lucena, noble of Castile, descendant of a Gothic king, absolute and unquestioned ruler of the island and all it contained.

A hush fell upon the crowd as they watched his approach, and his steel-gray eyes flashed across them with serene indifference.

Under the afternoon sun Rocaverde glowed like a huge cone-shaped emerald, rising in slopes of velvet forest to a high central peak, at whose foot nestled the white village. The Mediterranean gleamed cobalt-blue, touched here and there with curling foam, and breaking in a silver line along the beach.

The little group of brilliantly dressed officers stood on the end of the wharf, left clear by the respectful crowd. They had been laughing and chatting, but as the dripping oars poised for the stop they, too, fell silent.

"Shall you tell him to-night of Gonsalvo, Don Estevan?" asked Miguel Faria, lowering his voice.

"To-night, surely, but not here," replied Estevan.

"Do you think my lord can make Gonsalvo speak?" queried a young officer whose sword-hilt had been designed for

a Sultan of Granada, but who bore a dozen dangerous scars under his effeminately gorgeous costume. "The animal is obstinate enough to resist."

Estevan made no answer; his eyes were fixed on the dancing boat. The others exchanged glances and looked at the two cousins.

Lucena had risen, and waited for the landing with the ease and grace of one to whom the swaying floor was most familiar. He was five years older than Estevan, but looked much more; the very carriage of his head betrayed years of autocratic command. As the boat touched he stepped on the wharf, and faced the group for an instant before acknowledging the general salute, his glance traveling deliberately over them. But to Estevan he opened his arms.

"You have recovered?" he demanded, the imperious question made a caress by its tone.

"Quite; it was never serious," responded Estevan. "I might have gone with you, *señor.*"

"I shall not go again without you," replied Lucena curtly.

Estevan smiled, and moved aside as his cousin turned to the others.

But not all the faces that met Lucena were bright with pleasure at his return; Mirando studiously avoided his chief's direct gaze, Don Ruy's expression was anxious under its grimness, and the air was alive with uneasy curiosity. Lucena's cold face remained impassive, but the curl of his lip was not pleasant to see as he ordered the return to the castle.

As they passed up the dock Estevan caught sight of Juan, and smiling, tossed him a yellow coin.

"Ah, *señor,* if Señor Mirando has already given me the ducat!" the boy protested shrilly.

Estevan nodded, his dark-blue eyes sparkling with gaiety.

"Thank Señor Mirando, then, Juanito. I pay my own debts."

CHAPTER II.

THE PLEDGING OF A WORD.

Two hundred years before this Don Luís of the fourteenth century, another Luís de Lucena had loved and married a girl of the north—a gray-eyed, golden-haired daughter of vikings. From her the long line of Lucenas that followed drew their tall stature, their lawless joy of battle, their yielding to the lure of the sea.

Yet the pride of the Spanish noble so modified this, so forbade the viking outlawry, that never a Lucena forfeited the respect and fear of his own race. The court of Castile was open to them and theirs.

But the wealthy Moors of Africa, the cultured Arabs of Andalusia, the Oriental merchants, all united in calling the Lucenas pirates; and from their point of view the name bore a shadow of truth. Rocaverde was weighted with Moorish gold; the babies played with jeweled trinkets wrought for dark sultanas; Lucena's common sailors wore the silks of Granada, the wonderful arabesqued armor of Toledo, and boots of perfumed Cordovan leather.

Lucena's castle, gray and somber without, was within a riot of this Oriental luxury, a reminiscence of Zahara or the Alhambra. There was always a faint suggestion of incongruity between his stately figure, with its self-contained bearing, and the Eastern atmosphere surrounding him.

Perhaps a realization of this prompted Estevan's first remark when they found themselves together that evening.

"Do you know, *señor,* that the breath of the ocean follows you in here?" he asked playfully, his eyes on the other's broad shoulders.

Lucena turned from the window and contemplated him. They were alone in Lucena's rooms, and Estevan half sat, half reclined on a divan piled with furs that certainly had not come from Spanish hills or plains. His fair head rested against a tawny panther-skin, and the animal's jeweled green eyes glared over his shoulder.

"You have something to tell me," said Lucena irrelevantly. "The castle is agape with mystery and expectation. What is it?"

"We are like naughty children when the master returns," Estevan smiled. No one else ever jested with Lucena. "I have something to tell you, *señor*—about Gonsalvo."

He sat up, pushing away the cushions and scented skins.

"I did not notice him on the wharf," commented Lucena.

"No; he is in prison."

"Because?"

"It is a strange story," Estevan responded slowly. "Soon after you had left, I noticed a change—a creeping restraint or distrust—a new unrest in the castle. Men talking together would fall silent when any one approached, or glance furtively at each other in passing. I was puzzled, *señor.*"

Lucena waited, his brows contracted.

"One night Miguel Faria went out late and alone. You know his love of gay colors; for some reason, he chose to wear black that night. At the foot of the great stairs Gonsalvo joined him and began to speak of things so amazing that Miguel stood aghast. In the dark, Gonsalvo had mistaken him for some one else, and before he discovered the error Miguel learned that a plot was being formed to overthrow your authority, perhaps even to kill you."

He hesitated an instant, regarding the calm face opposite.

"Miguel came to me, and Gonsalvo was at once arrested. But he will not speak, and we have no names. We do not know who are our friends, nor who our enemies; each man looks askance at his companions and is uneasy for himself. The situation is impossible. I have even offered Gonsalvo his life—in your name, of course—if he would confess. But I believe he fears the vengeance of his comrades as much as he does you, *señor.*"

"We shall see," replied Lucena dryly.

Estevan leaned forward with eager interest.

"You believe he will speak, *señor!*"

The other looked at him.

"Men do not refuse to answer *me.* We will learn of the Inquisition, Estevan."

Estevan paled, his fair face grave and distressed.

"You will do that, *señor?* Pardon; I can kill an enemy in battle or in the passion of a duel, but torture I could not."

"*I* can," answered Lucena deliberately, his lips curving in a cruel smile.

His cousin shuddered. Lucena came over and took a chair opposite; after a moment he pushed a small disk of translucent cubes across the table.

"Have you outgrown your taste for sweetmeats while I was away?" he asked lightly. "The cook who made these lumps of delight was captured in sight of Velez Malaga. I give him to you."

Estevan roused himself with a little effort and laughed.

"The ladies will thank you, *señor.* My sister has come home; did you see her with Doña Soledad?"

"I saw my mother alone," returned Luís. "To-morrow you must present me to the cousin I have never seen."

"The convent has made her most dignified," Esteven said mischievously. "I think I am a little afraid of her myself."

"Doña Soledad told me she was very lovely," answered Lucena, his smile this time most different from the last. "Estevan, I am going to send you away for to-night. Tell Gomez to come to me."

Estevan rose obediently.

"I wonder," he murmured, "how long I could have borne Rocaverde without you, *señor,* with the sea calling me night and day. I believe we could not live, we of the blood of the north, if we were kept quietly at home."

"If you do not like it ashore you must be less recklessly daring abroad," replied Lucena. "Only because you were wounded did I leave you. And even the sea-charm failed without you."

Their eyes met. Lucena's softened to a tenderness half fierce in its intensity; the warmth of Estevan's still sparkled with the mirth of a moment past.

It was near midnight as the young noble went down the stairs, and Captain Gomez was not easy to find. When at last he was discovered and sent to his chief Estevan lingered in the great hall, gazing absently at the new spoils which littered the place with dashes of brilliant color.

"You are awake late, Don Estevan," said a voice behind him.

He turned and met the saturnine face of Pedro Mirando.

"I was with Don Luís," he explained. "You also are wakeful."

"Does my lord hope to make Gonsalvo confess?" the man asked, letting

the remark pass unheeded. "I suppose you spoke of him, *señor?*"

Estevan nodded gravely.

"Naturally. And Don Luís intends he shall confess, if only under torture."

"I expected it," murmured Mirando. "Don Estevan, I have something of serious importance to tell you at once. Will you come to my room for half an hour?"

"Why not?" Estevan assented readily, although with some surprise.

Mirando bowed, and they turned together.

The castle was very quiet, and they met no one in the brief transit. Once it seemed to Estevan that a shadow slipped down the corridor before them, but when they reached the corner no one was visible. The late moon had risen, a crescent of sullen red that cast flickering patches of light through the windows they passed.

Mirando led the way to a wing of the building—one of those massive buttresses which looked so small from the sea below yet were in reality so large. As the other opened the door Estevan glanced around, interested in a part of the castle where he had seldom been.

"Will you come in, *señor?*" said Mirando, his deference curiously eager.

Estevan entered the dark room and heard the door close behind him. Some one moved; the next moment a light flashed up, showing a face not Mirando's bending over the lamp.

With an exclamation, Estevan turned and saw four men in the room—four of Lucena's trusted officers, their faces drawn and anxious as they watched him. Mirando stood against the door, breathing quickly, like a man who has just accomplished some difficult feat.

In the moment of silence the sentinel's hourly call floated thin and clear from the tower above.

"*Ave Maria purisima!—Las doce, y todo es sereno!*" ("Hail, Mary, purest of women!—Twelve o'clock, and all's well!")

As the cry died away Estevan spoke, his smooth voice stingingly sarcastic.

"Gentlemen, I salute you. But if you desired this interview why not have come to my rooms, where you have all so often shared my hospitality? Really, if we did not know each other so well this might even suggest a trap—pardon the ugly word."

"Don Estevan, it is your privilege to say what you will to-night," answered Mirando slowly. "And the term is not out of place."

There was a chair near by, and Estevan sat down, pushing back his fair hair with his characteristic gesture.

"Since we are to be frank, as becomes old friends," he said, with winning grace, "I suppose I am facing the gentlemen so earnestly sought—Gonsalvo's associates. Indeed, I quite appreciate your uncomfortable situation—Don Luís is so impetuous—but I fail to see what you hope from me."

"You could set Gonsalvo free," Mirando suggested.

"I could," acquiesced Estevan. "Unfortunately, I am eccentric, dear *señor,* and a threat always causes me to act in the opposite manner from that requested."

"You are playing, *señor,* and *we* are in desperate earnest."

"Pardon, I am perfectly serious," he corrected lightly.

Mirando made a movement of impatience.

"Don Estevan, to-morrow my lord will obtain Gonsalvo's confession; the man is a coward, and will break down at the threat of torture. You have guessed that he will implicate us, and we are not alone in this. We must—*must, señor*—place Gonsalvo out of my lord's reach, or—"

Estevan looked around the circle, his smile half scorn.

"I am unarmed, gentlemen. Your time is well chosen. But let me point out that there is no surer way to provoke Don Luís to searching investigation than by killing me. It would be wiser to kill Gonsalvo. I will not help you."

"Gonsalvo is beyond our power," answered Mirando. "You have not understood; *your* life is not the one we menace."

"Whose, then?" demanded Estevan.

"My lord's," was the low reply.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Estevan, startled into a glance at the locked door.

"It is so, Don Estevan. Either Gonsalvo escapes to-night or my lord dies before the trial to-morrow."

"Do you hold the life of Don Luís in your hand, that you talk so lightly?" questioned Estevan, with a contempt not wholly sincere.

"Yes," declared Mirando bluntly.

The two men looked at each other.

"We have been mad," Mirando went on after a moment. "We had plots of which we are forever cured. If Gonsalvo does not betray us my lord will in the future have no quieter subjects than we who have stood so near rebellion. But we will not die, *señor*. We have brought you here to offer you this choice: either set Gonsalvo free and give your word never to betray what has passed in this meeting or remain here by force until my lord is dead and the castle in our hands."

The mockery left Estevan's face, and a strange likeness to his cousin crept into his changing expression.

"Words, Mirando! Threats you cannot carry out!" he retorted. "Have you thought what your proposition would mean to me? Will you seriously assure me that you expect me to take your place and face Don Luís without an explanation of my action? Let us speak of something reasonable, gentlemen."

"Certainly it is not to your advantage," the other returned, stung by his tone. "You appeared to love my lord, and we offer you an opportunity to save him; if you refuse, he will die before you leave this room."

Estevan rose, his glance flashing from man to man.

"You are in earnest, gentlemen?" he asked incredulously.

The assent was a murmur rather than spoken words, but the eyes that met his were steadily resolved.

"You are asking me to give you my honor and life; how can you convince me that after I do this you will not attack Don Luís again? That the life I buy for him will be safe?"

"We take any oath you choose," Mirando said eagerly. "We ask no more than to resume our old peace, our old loyalty to my lord. And for your danger, *señor*, what you tell your cousin he will believe."

"I will not lie to him," flashed Estevan haughtily.

He made no reply, and there was a pause. The lamp flickered, crackling as the wick slipped into the oil, and one of the men arose to tend it, returning softly to his seat.

"Give me some proof that you can execute your plan," Estevan said, at last.

Mirando moved nearer the light, scrupulously set a chair for his prisoner, and produced a small packet of papers. As they bent over them he began to speak, cautiously and rapidly, his voice inaudible across the narrow room. But occasionally the whisper rose in emphasis, and the others nodded understanding as they caught such words as: "Desperate cause—every ship but one—Africa —Papal indulgence."

Estevan understood that Don Luís could be murdered, and that the murderers could escape, with impunity. When Mirando ended Estevan's head sank on his folded arms.

The men leaned forward, watching, intent; the place was very still. A little shiver ran through the group when at length Estevan lifted his colorless face.

"Very well," he said quietly.

"You consent?" Mirando cried.

"Yes."

The shock of triumph was accompanied by something else—something that kept the victors from looking at one another.

"You will swear silence, *señor?*" Mirando asked, almost humbly.

"My oath is not more binding than my word, Señor Mirando. But I will swear what you please."

The men laid a tiny ivory crucifix on the table. As the others gathered round the distant call broke the silence a second time.

"Ave Maria purisima!—La una, y todo es sereno!"

CHAPTER III.

MORNING IN ROCAVERDE.

ROCAVERDE possessed the virtue of early rising. The first ray of sun that glittered across the rippling water could count on finding the dimpled children awake and their mothers' smiling faces at doors or windows.

Indeed, it was difficult to sleep with the fresh morning breeze setting everything adance and the birds in a very ecstasy of greeting. And this morning there was the additional spur of having the men at home, those delightful masculine playthings whose value was enhanced by their frequent absence. The wives and sweethearts of the sailors even felt a slight contempt for their sisters whose men were mere stay-at-homes—fishermen or gardeners.

Emilia Pardo, leaning out from her casement, her dark eyes smiling and reminiscent, was the first victim of young Juan's overflowing exuberance as he sauntered down the village street.

"*Holà,* Emilia!" he called vigorously. "Are you thinking of the kiss I saw Diaz take yesterday?"

The girl blushed, but stood her ground with the courage of happiness.

"Why should he not, *chico,* if we are to be married this fortnight?" she retorted.

Juan stopped and regarded her critically.

"Diaz has good judgment," he approved. "Tell me, was it *that* he was saying to you last night for three good hours? I saw you, *señorita,* although you saw but him."

"I saw more than you, Juan Perez," she parried hastily. "Know you that my lord has pardoned Gonsalvo, you who know everything?"

"How do you know?" he cried.

"Ah, Juanito, are you going to set the village laughing at Diaz and me?"

"No, no!" he coaxed eagerly. "Tell me, Emilia *mia.* I only teased you a little—just to see you blush like a pomegranate-blossom, Emilia *bella.*"

"Well, then, I saw Señor Gonsalvo and two men whose faces were hidden go down to the wharf early this morning, and after a while the two men came back alone."

"And you call that knowing my lord pardoned him?"

Emilia's eyes opened wide.

"How else would he be free?" she demanded simply.

Juan stared at her blankly, then turned and darted toward the road to the castle.

The officer of the guard—the lisping cavalier who carried the Sultan of Granada's sword—was crossing the court as the flying little figure dashed up.

"Don Bernardo!" the boy panted excitedly. "Pray you, wait."

He turned languidly.

"You, Juanito? What now, child? Have you dreamed my lord has come in again, or are the Moors in the harbor?"

"No no, *señor,*" Juan denied. "I would ask if my lord has freed Gonsalvo."

The young officer was surprised into a genuine laugh.

"You have slept in the moonlight, Juanito. My lord is more likely to try us all than to pardon Gonsalvo."

"But he was in the village last night!"

"My lord?"

"No, *señor;* Gonsalvo. Emilia Pardo and Diaz were making love at her window by moonlight, and they saw him."

Bernardo's chin fell.

"You are dreaming," he said bruskly. "But such dreams are not for me to play with; come to Captain Gomez."

"And if Gonsalvo is gone what will you give me?" bargained Juan, climbing the steps with alacrity.

"If Gonsalvo is gone and any of us survive until to-morrow doubtless you can claim what you choose," Bernardo said grimly.

Lucena also had risen early and watched the dawn from his balcony, leaning on a vine-draped rail. The morning on shore was an agreeable novelty after the long voyage—a morning bright with dewy flowers and noisy with the chatter of birds. The sounds of the awaking castle reached here only as a subdued murmur borne on air heavy with the fragrance of lemon-blossoms and almond-trees stirred by the light winds. Lucena's cold face was gravely meditative in the delicate light; if he thought of Gonsalvo and the coming trial there was no sign of it in his tranquil expression.

After a while he moved slightly, and his eyes fell on another balcony, below and to the left of his own. A lady was seated there—a girl, from her slim grace of figure—gazing across the sloping hill at the ocean. Her back was turned toward Lucena, but something in the

poise of her small head, in the clustering waves of fair hair, struck him with a thrill of recognition. Surely this must be Estevan's sister, the cousin he had never seen.

He watched her with unconscious pleasure, careful not to move, for fear of frightening her away. He was perfectly aware of the respect and positive dread with which he was regarded—aware that the feeling was not unfounded. He gave what he received. No one had ever loved him, save Estevan; his father had died when he was still a child; and his mother was a conventional Spanish woman, who was irritated and dismayed by her viking son.

How still the girl was! He remembered that she was fresh from an inland convent, and looked at the scene with instinctive appreciation of what she must feel. Rosy mist trailed here and there over the turquoise floor of the sea, like the garments of fleeing Undines or Nereids; the sun mounted, fiery bright, into the delicate blue of the sky, which steadily deepened in tint. He wished she would turn—

"My lord," faltered a timid voice behind him.

Lucena swung around, his brows drawing together.

"I did not call you," he said.

"Pardon, my lord; Don Bernardo and Captain Gomez beg to report something of urgency."

Lucena made a gesture of impatience and reentered the room.

"Admit them," he ordered briefly.

The two men who entered were both visibly nervous; Gomez, indeed, was pale under the bronze of many a voyage.

"Well, gentlemen?" questioned Lucena, surveying them.

Bernardo looked at his chief, noting inconsequentially that the sapphire clasp at his throat just matched the dark velvet of his costume, wondering hazily if it had been chosen with intention. He pondered this problem while he answered.

"My lord, Gonsalvo is gone."

"What?" said Lucena, in a tone that effectually recalled the young officer's mind.

"My lord, I did not go on duty until an hour ago. He was gone then," he explained hastily.

"Gone? Do men leave my prison at their pleasure? Gomez, this is your affair. Gonsalvo was in your charge; where is he?"

"My lord, he is gone," Gomez replied hoarsely.

Lucena rose.

"If he is gone you take his place," he said, his voice low and in perfect control. "Don Bernardo, give orders to have the island searched at once. Your prisoner is probably in the forests or on the other side of the mountain. Let every house be examined, and every corner of the castle; look also in the ships at anchor. Set the whole population to the hunt, and promise a reward. Go!"

"My lord," ventured Bernardo, "Juan Perez brings word that Gonsalvo was seen in the village last night, and this morning a fishing-boat is missing."

Lucena's white teeth pressed his lip.

"Very well; in addition to what I have said, bid the ships make sail and search the sea. Don Estevan will command them."

The name sent a curious shiver through the two men. Bernardo retreated toward the door, hesitating and regarding his companion as Lucena spoke again.

"Gomez, there is no way Gonsalvo could leave his cell without your keys. Either account to me for his escape or consider yourself under arrest."

"My lord," the man faltered reluctantly, "Don Estevan took the keys last night."

There was an astounded pause.

"What do you mean?" demanded Lucena.

"My lord, near two o'clock, last night, Don Estevan came to my alcove opposite Gonsalvo's cell. He believed me asleep, I think, and took the keys. He brought them back after a while; the room was half dark, and I was too puzzled to speak or question. I thought you had sent him, my lord, until this morning; then I knew he had stolen them—"

Lucena's hand struck the word from his lips.

"You lie!" he gasped, in such a passion of wrath as they had never conceived even in him. "Open the door, Don Bernardo. You shall repeat this

tale to Estevan, Gomez, before I have you hanged."

His grasp closed on the stupefied man's shoulder, and as Bernardo mechanically obeyed he half led, half dragged his prisoner into the corridor.

CHAPTER IV.

SEALED LIPS.

THE great hall of the castle was always gay and animated when the ships were in, but this morning a new excitement pervaded it. The men gathered in little groups, talking in subdued tones and exhausting themselves with comment and conjecture.

The litter from the half-unloaded ships, which yesterday had been so attractive, was now scattered and pushed carelessly aside. Bright-hued tissues of silk and gold, carved ivory trinkets from Cathay, marvelous swords whose least value was in their jeweled hilts—all lay unheeded where they had been tossed or dropped.

Estevan, colorless, with heavy shadows beneath his eye, leaned against a column and idly caressed one of his beautiful hounds. Perhaps he found a certain dreary amusement in the eager conversation of the different men, in their wild speculations and explanations which did not explain. Mirando approached him unobtrusively during a moment when the general attention was occupied.

"The conviction is universal that the escape is Gomez's work," he observed smoothly. "Doubtless, Don Estevan, my lord will disregard any absurd accusations the man may make in his desperation."

Estevan looked at him coldly and returned no answer, continuing to pass his hand over the dog's silken head. Flushing, Mirando bowed ceremoniously and moved away.

"No fishing-boat would carry him to the Spanish coast, and to Africa he would not dare," one of the nearest group was declaring, when suddenly the private door that opened on the dais was flung violently back.

All turned with one impulse and stood silent as Lucena appeared, still grasping his captive, and followed by the agitated Bernardo.

"Don Estevan," exclaimed Lucena, the powerful restraint he forced on his voice leaving it nevertheless shaken with passion, "because I do not know what rumors this man may have set afloat I bring him here to repeat his lie in public before I have him hanged, and *not* for your contradiction. Speak, you!" He cast Gomez from him with a force that sent the man reeling to the center of the platform.

Dazed, bewildered, realizing that his one hope of escape lay in the man he accused, Gomez followed the general gaze to the face he sought.

"*Señor,*" he cried, taking a step forward, "you know I speak the truth! *Señor,* tell my lord you took the keys from my table last night when you thought me asleep and brought them back half an hour later. *Por Diós, señor;* you know if it is you or I."

The accent of truth was in the appeal, and it struck doubt through the crowd. Lucena waited in unquestioning confidence. Estevan came forward very quietly.

"Gomez is right, *señor,*" he said, his steady voice falling strangely on the excited room. The dog followed noiselessly and stood by his side.

"You took the keys?" exclaimed Lucena, with incredulous astonishment. "*You,* Estevan?"

"Yes."

Lucena's expression darkened ever so little even as the anger died away.

"There are no doors in the castle closed to you, but it would have saved misconstruction had you asked me for them, Estevan. What did you want with them?"

Estevan found no reply. Only Mirando, watching him, guessed that the room wavered before his eyes as he heard the tranquil and affectionate reproach of the question. Lucena regarded his cousin in surprise, then glanced around the circle and seized the thought in the intent faces.

"Do you mean that you freed Gonsalvo?" he asked abruptly. "Is that what you wish me to understand, Estevan?"

Gomez clenched his hands, his eager

eyes on the young noble's face. Estevan looked at him as he answered.

"Yes, *señor.*"

A sighing breath came from the crowd. Lucena passed his hand across his forehead, as if to clear away the tangle of perplexities.

"Why?" he demanded, wonder still holding him so completely as to leave no place for anger. "Why, my cousin?"

Mirando moved nearer the dais, so near that a step would have brought him behind his unconscious chief, while he held Estevan's gaze with the significance of his own narrowed eyes. This question had been foreseen the night before, and Estevan had received the warning that he must provoke no search for other culprits by asserting his own innocent intentions. The two men looked at each other with perfect comprehension, and Lucena's demand remained unanswered.

In the silence the veteran Ruy de la Vega advanced from the others, his dark face flushed and indignant.

"My lord," he said impetuously, "there is not one of us who remained in Rocaverde who has not felt these weeks of suspicion and distrust—not one who could have moved to aid Gonsalvo without convicting himself. Let Don Estevan answer, as we would have been forced to answer. For who has so much to gain by overturning your rule, my lord, as the one who would rule in your place?"

Estevan flung back his head, his eyes blazing.

"It is false—" he began fiercely, then stopped as he encountered Mirando's warning glance.

"Then, prove it so, *señor;* I ask no more," retorted the other, snatching his sudden pause.

Lucena's voice cut between.

"Ruy de la Vega, you have no place between my cousin and myself. Estevan, for your honor and mine, you must explain why you have done this."

The hush in the room was profound. Two men had stealthily joined Mirando, one of them playing nervously with the hilt of a slim stiletto. Unconsciously, Estevan's face grew worn before the watching eyes, and two scarlet spots rose in his cheeks. Lucena paled slowly, waiting, but when he spoke it was even gently.

"Estevan, I know how you shrank last night from the idea of Gonsalvo's trial; if in the very madness of pity you set him free to save him from torture say so."

It was a moment before Estevan answered.

"No, *señor,*" he said.

Lucena sought again to meet the eyes that had never avoided his until now, then took his place in the great chair that awaited him.

"If this is a trial," he said calmly, "you may speak, de la Vega."

The permission was unexpected, and the old officer hesitated.

"My lord, I bear no enmity to Don Estevan," he declared. "But I have seen—and not I alone—the delight he found in governing Rocaverde in your absence. And when this rebellion was discovered we wondered at his lack of effort to make Gonsalvo speak. He has visited the prisoner in his cell frequently, and alone; we did not know why until to-day. My lord, forgive me, but who would risk so much to free Gonsalvo except one of those who feared his confession?"

A murmur of assent ran around the room. Lucena looked full at the witness, and in spite of his honest sincerity, de la Vega shrank slightly.

"Estevan, you have heard; have you no denial?" asked Lucena.

Long ere this the scene had faded, for Estevan, into a background against which two faces stood out—his cousin's and Mirando's. Watching the last, he replied almost apathetically:

"I can say nothing, *señor.*"

Lucena arose abruptly and strode over to him.

"Nothing?" he repeated. "Look at me, my cousin, and tell me you know nothing of this."

For the first time that day their eyes met; then, giddy, sick, conscious that to face Lucena was to make silence impossible, Estevan sank to his knee and hid his face.

Lucena remained motionless, looking down at the bent fair head. Something was rising in him that later might sweep down all—an agony still too new to be

realized, an anger that might kill—but now he only felt Estevan's humiliation. Nothing personal could ever affect him like this disgrace of the one he loved—to see at his feet the head that had been level with his heart. He hated the crowd for witnessing it, hated Ruy de la Vega for putting the treason in words, hated Gomez for being innocent. For a moment he was possessed by the blind berserker rage—he longed to kill, kill. Then the Spanish noble's dignity held him again, and with it came unreasoning faith.

To the onlookers, his expression had scarcely changed in the long moment before he spoke; perhaps no one but Estevan recognized the harshness of his tone less as a sign of anger than of suffering.

"Estevan de Lucena," he said, "it may be that you have some explanation not to be given in public; if so, come to me alone. If not, go to your own house until I send for you. Don Bernardo, I believe I gave you some orders to be carried out at once; why are you here? Miguel, go prepare the ships to sail immediately. You, Gomez, have proved yourself unfit for your former duties; you will deliver the keys to Pedro Mirando and aid Don Bernardo's search. Gentlemen, I have offered five thousand ducats for Gonsalvo's capture, and the morning is advancing."

In an instant the hall was in commotion. Mirando sprang to open the door as Lucena passed out, but Estevan made no move to follow. When he arose, it was to go the other way, through the arched gates and down the steps. The people fell back on either side, leaving his path clear and looking strangely at Lucena's dog as it still walked beside him.

CHAPTER V.

ARRIA DE LUCENA.

To go back to a place where one face has been and is no longer, where each familiar object insists on the absence and adds its voiceless protest—that was the ordeal which awaited Lucena. The tumbled furs of the divan lay as Estevan had tossed them the night before; the little tray of sweetmeats still stood on the table.

During the first hours, he still cherished the hope that Estevan would come to him and explain. When that failed, and information came of his cousin's departure without protest or defense, Lucena went out and flung himself fiercely into the search for Gonsalvo. During the hunt he learned much—from overheard phrases, from hesitating comment, and innocent actions distorted or misinterpreted. When he left he was unable to conceive the possibility of Estevan's betrayal; he returned shaken and reluctantly convinced.

Those who saw his face when he came home stood aside, venturing no word. He shut himself in his rooms, and the castle waited apprehensively.

Meanwhile, the search was vigorously carried on, and the village hummed with gossip and excitement. With the fickleness of the peasant, the old love for Estevan veered to hasty scorn and condemnation. Only Juanito Perez fretted and chafed, too sullen even to tease Emilia when Diaz sat with his mandolin half the night on her door-step.

It was the third morning when Lucena came out, so early in the gray dawn that the castle still lay silent and unheeding. The corridors were deserted; in corners the heavy shadows lingered somberly. Lucena pushed open one of the shuttered windows and looked out, watching the stars fade into the brightening sky. The sullen light was no more chill and harsh than his gray eyes. By and by a sleepy bird called from a tree; a faint pink crept into the eastern sky.

"Don Luís," said a clear voice behind him.

Lucena waited a moment before moving; something sent a thrill of expectation through nerves he had believed numbed. But when he turned only habitual self-control checked the exclamation on his lips.

A girl was facing him, tall and slim in her clinging velvet robes, and most strangely familiar. For Estevan's violet eyes gazed from her still face; Estevan's sun-bright hair rippled across her forehead; Estevan's were the arched black brows and curling lashes. For an instant the contraction of Lucena's heart prevented speech.

"*Señor,* I am Arria de Lucena."

"Estevan's sister," he murmured slowly.

"You might have said 'My cousin,' *señor.*"

The answer was not a plea, but a rebuke. Lucena was startled, and not displeased.

"Pardon, my cousin," he replied calmly, "you fancied a slight that was not intended. I spoke only my thought on seeing you."

"You are generous, *señor,* to remind me that it is a reproach to be Estevan's sister. Believe me, it is only from necessity that I am here."

The recollection of a gay voice stirred in Lucena's memory; what had Estevan said of this girl's dignity? For a flashing second he remembered the laughing eyes which were so like the cold ones before him.

"If you do not feel it a reproach—" he began.

She interrupted him with a gesture.

"I feel it so deeply, *señor,* that I have shame to stand before you; and I hate you for being the cause of this disgrace."

The vehement cry was so exactly an echo of what Lucena himself had experienced that he flushed dark-red and moved nearer her.

"If you from a convent feel that," he exclaimed, with equal passion, "what do you think I have felt—who am no child, and loved him?"

"I, too, loved him," she answered fearlessly.

Lucena smiled.

"You? You saw him twice a year, perhaps, under the abbess's guard. *I* have lived with him day and night for fifteen years; slept with him, sharing my cloak; fought men and sea with him at my side; grown with him to manhood. And because he was wounded I left him here to rule while I went on my last voyage; I returned, to find *this!*"

The tide of his feelings caught her.

"Doña Soledad said you would kill him," she exclaimed. "I know why, now."

"If he had been here the last three days there have been moments when that might have happened. But—"

"You pitied him?"

"I knew what would come, and sent him beyond my reach."

They looked at each other in the tinting light, the girl shaken out of wounded pride into comprehension of a deeper suffering, Lucena vaguely conscious that he had spoken as never before to any one except Estevan. And as the morning brightened he realized more and more how like him she was—an etherealized Estevan free from stain.

Arria was the first to speak, gathering up the dignity so carefully taught her.

"*Señor,* I cannot question what you do with my brother; it is your right to judge him, not mine. But it is my duty to share the exile he has brought on us, and to-day I go to his house. Doña Soledad bade me tell you of my intention. *Señor!*" She saluted him and drew back a step.

Lucena's face hardened.

"I may not leave Estevan there," he said harshly. "You cannot go to him, Doña Arria."

She paled at the implied menace, but raised her head proudly.

"Very well, *señor;* then, I will return to the convent."

"It is not suitable that you return to the convent; as my cousin, your place is with your only feminine relative, my mother."

"Your castle is no home for one of my blood, Don Luís."

Their eyes met, and Arria's fell. No man in Rocaverde, not Estevan, could dare Lucena's cold anger.

"Your blood is my blood, Doña Arria; your brother is my cousin. You remain."

"You have no right to keep me," she protested.

"Perhaps not, but I have the power."

Somewhere in the building a door closed sharply; the tramp of marching feet came from the paved courtyard; the castle stirred and woke. Arria swept a profound salute to the watching man and moved away with unhurried grace.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE TERRACE.

THAT day the ships came in again, each from its own course, without Lucena's favorite Gaviota; she brought news

of a fishing-boat found floating bottom upward off the Spanish coast. So ended the hope or fear of the truth being disclosed.

Rocaverde settled down to the old routine; the village turned to the newer interest of Emilia's coming wedding and the presence of the jovial sailors. In the castle, the depression was deeper, but the general feeling was one of relief at a danger escaped. If Lucena's rule was sterner than ever, it was still just and passionless.

Only once had any one ventured an allusion to Estevan before him. On the morning of his interview with Arria frail old Leone Valdi had come to him in the great hall.

"My lord," he said, "I have been with Don Estevan for many years; permit me to go to him."

Lucena's expression had not been pleasant to see; he only answered curtly:

"If you go to him you cannot return."

That hour Valdi went.

The greatest change from the usual customs came to the part of the household ruled by Doña Soledad. The wing of the castle called hers had always been set apart as different from the rest; even the adjoining garden was stiff and regular, with its rows of trim flowers. The Oriental atmosphere that pervaded Rocaverde stopped at her doors, giving place to Castilian severity and decorum.

The ladies of her attendance were for the most part somewhat advanced in age, having grown old with their mistress in the years since Don Jaime de Lucena brought her home.

Doña Soledad had never found her son congenial, and he had never paid more than the daily visit of ceremony to her rooms. Estevan's gaiety and boyish good humor, a coaxing grace that made his audacity irresistible, had proved him a more welcome guest, and during his enforced three months ashore his visits had often brightened the monotonous days. But Lucena was not amusing; hence, it was with surprise, and with some annoyance, that she heard him announced one evening.

"Is anything the matter?" she demanded as he touched her fingers to his lips.

Lucena smiled in perfect comprehension, glancing around the severe room at the women, who bent over their needlework with demureness.

"I have come to meet my cousin," he returned composedly.

"You must have done so already, since she tells me you have refused her permission to join her brother," answered Doña Soledad, selecting a skein of colored thread.

"To talk with her, then, if you prefer the phrase, *señora*."

"Arria!" she called, raising her voice slightly. "Come here, my child."

The young girl arose from a chair in the shadow and came forward. The old pain gripped Lucena's heart as he looked at the resemblance that was at once pleasure and anguish. The very glance of inquiry and rebellion as she saluted him was Estevan's. He remembered the day he had told him to remain at home—

"My cousin," he said calmly, "I think the terrace is more attractive than this dark room. As the *señora* can see us from here, we shall break no conventions."

Doña Soledad and Arria exchanged swift looks; both fancied Lucena's errand to be not one of peace, and both desired to escape a scene before the waiting-women. Very slowly, the girl laid her hand in Lucena's and allowed him to lead her out.

In spite of herself, the transition from the gloomy interior to the glow and perfume of a southern sunset drew a sigh of enjoyment from Arria.

"You like this garden?" commented Lucena. "Yet its walls shut out all that makes Rocaverde beautiful—the sea."

The simple remark could not have been more different from what she had expected.

"Perhaps I do not like the sea," she suggested wilfully, yet surprised into graciousness.

"You are a Lucena."

"Very true, and I do like the ocean. Pardon, we are going too far from Doña Soledad."

He indicated a low bench beneath a flowering tree.

"I am taking you there, my cousin."

He did not take the seat beside her,

but remained leaning against the trunk of the tree, watching her face.

"You are angry because I brought you here; why?"

"Doña Soledad has reminded me that I have no right to be angry with you, *señor;* that I should rather be grateful because you are content with keeping me a prisoner."

"Doña Soledad is more than generous to me," he said ironically. "You long so much to return to the convent, my cousin?"

"No," she retorted with the frankness of irritation.

"Then, it is to your brother you would go. Doña Arria, that is one place in Rocaverde where all is desolation; the ground falls away in ugly cliffs and treacherous slopes, pine-trees take the place of olives and blossoming almonds, and the sea roars sullenly across the reefs. The old Quinta itself has not been occupied for years. Would your devotion make you happy there, my cousin?"

His tone brought the scarlet blood to her cheeks.

"It is duty would take me there, *señor,*" she declared coldly, "not devotion to Estevan. I make no pretense to what I do not feel; and what he has done is without excuse. He must have gone mad, I think."

"Do you know what I hoped you would say the other morning?" he asked deliberately. "I thought you would claim he was innocent."

Her large eyes opened wonderingly.

"He did not deny it, *señor?*"

"No."

"Then—"

Lucena shrugged his shoulders and was silent. But Arria understood, for when she spoke again it was less hardly, though still with the coldness beside which Lucena's manner seemed passionate.

"The good sisters taught us much of duty, and taught us to practise it; but of love we were left to guess. I am very ignorant of such love as you felt for Estevan, Don Luís; I did not know such things existed." She hesitated an instant. "*I* have never cared very much for any one. *Señor,* it is not that I blame you for punishing him, but that I cannot forgive you for making our disgrace public."

"And do you think I did so willingly?" demanded Lucena fiercely, his eyes flashing into gray fire. "Do you think that when I went to him in the hall I even imagined his guilt possible? You say rightly you cannot understand. I would rather he had succeeded and killed me before I knew."

Arria shrank slightly, and her slender jeweled fingers closed on the almond-flower which she had idly gathered.

"Doña Soledad told me you had no emotions," she murmured. "That only pride or anger ever ruffled the calm of your indifference."

"She is quite correct; Estevan was my one weakness."

"Was?"

"And is—so far."

She regarded him without a trace of coquetry, her gaze clear and uncomprehending. Lucena, meeting it, was fascinated and grimly amused. They had made her so dignified that one forgot her real youth, and remembering, he marveled at his late communicativeness.

"It is time I returned to the castle, *señor,*" she suggested, breaking the pause.

"If you will, my cousin. When I enter my mother's rooms I do not wonder that you prefer a convent."

For the first time, he saw her smile.

"If you could visit the convent you would find these rooms delightful."

"Then, you are not unhappy here?"

She colored faintly, conscious of her self-betrayal.

"If it were not for Estevan—" she began, and left the sentence unfinished.

For a moment the fancy caught and held Lucena. If Estevan had not done this thing, and they three had been together in tranquil friendliness, the brother's warm gaiety interpreting the sister's chill reserve—what then? They walked back in silence.

Doña Soledad scrutinized them sharply as they entered. Arria went to her former seat, bringing with her into the dusky room some of the sunset's rose and gold. Lucena took leave of his mother with the courteous composure of his arrival.

"You came here to wreak your temper on Arria," she observed, her tone too low for the rest to overhear. "You will

fail; she has her brother's face, but your own insensibility."

"I shall come to-morrow," he stated, with cool irrelevance.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHIPS SAIL AGAIN.

"You have been a long journey, Juan Perez; there is dust even on that curly black head of yours, and I see mountain thorns caught in your jacket."

"That does not concern you, Señora Diaz," the boy answered sullenly.

Emilia laughed teasingly, standing with coquettish pride on her own new door-sill.

"Not even if I can guess where you have been, Juanito?"

"You cannot."

"But we are cross to-day! Padre Jacinto is coming; shall I tell him you have been over the mountain, over to—"

"*Calla!*" he exclaimed angrily. "Always a woman is talking, talking. *Madre de Diós,* I can tell you something, too; my lord is going to sea again, so good-by to Diaz for a while, *señora.*"

"Oh!" she cried.

"It is so. You would not have known until to-morrow if you had left me in peace."

"But my lord has not been home a month. You are saying it to frighten me. Ah, *padre mio,* listen only to Juan, who says my lord goes to sea."

Padre Jacinto stopped, surveying them benevolently.

"Is it so? Well, Emilia, you are a sailor's wife, and a good girl who will not forget to burn her candle before Our Lady of the Sea."

"If it were true, yes, *padre.* But Juan says so to vex me, because I guessed he had crossed the mountain to see the one who is there."

The old man started uncomfortably, his pleasant face clouding.

"You should not accuse Juan of what would bring him my lord's displeasure," he said severely. "And if Juan has told you a falsehood he has done very wrong. Come with me, my son."

"*Padre mio,* I told her the truth," the boy protested, yielding reluctantly to the hand on his shoulder.

"I am glad to hear it, Juanito. Still, even the truth need not be unkindly spoken."

"She is too curious," muttered the boy.

Padre Jacinto made no reply until they had reached his little house and entered the quaint garden, when he seated himself on a bench before the door and contemplated his captive.

"Did you indeed visit Don Estevan, my child?" he asked, sinking his voice.

Juan dug a brown toe into the ground.

"Yes, *padre,*" he admitted unwillingly.

"How is he?" the other inquired.

Juan looked up in surprise; the question was not exactly what he had anticipated.

"He is paler and thinner, but very quiet and kind. I—"

Padre Jacinto patted the small sunburnt fist that hung within reach.

"You were attached to him, my poor Juan?"

"*Padre,* he was *so* good to me. He used to say to me, 'Wait a little—a little, Juanito—and you shall come with me on the sea. We will capture a sultan at least.' And his eyes laughed and danced, looking at me. It was I, *padre,* who ran to the castle that morning to tell of Gonsalvo's escape, and I thought that perhaps if I had not told—"

"There—there, my son."

"So, I crossed the mountain to-day and said it all to him—how I had not seen sun nor moon nor stars since that day of trouble. He put his arm around me—yes, as if he loved me—and explained that I had done no harm, that nothing could have made it different. He bade me not grieve or think of him sadly, for he paid his feudal service. Do you know what he meant, *padre?*"

"Perhaps," said Padre Jacinto softly, and made the sign of the cross.

Juan looked at him doubtfully, puzzled, yet venturing no question.

Over in the little plaza opposite, the laughing groups had gathered for their regular afternoon diversion, the *cachucha.* Rosa Paredes, the girl who had succeeded Emilia the matron as village beauty, was lightly poised in the center of the ring, her round arms lifted high, glittering with gemmed bangles. In front of her a lithe young sailor waited

eagerly, his dark face glowing in response to her sleepy glance, his foot beating time to the guitars and the rhythmic click of her castanets. Already the flower-like swaying steps had begun, when a joyous shout rang from the neighboring wharf.

"*Holà, señores;* news—news!"

All turned, and an outburst of laughter and applause hailed the interruption.

"News?" cried a dozen questioning voices. "News, *señor capitán?*"

The man saluted them from his post of vantage on a great pile of bales.

"News, *señores;* my lord sails to-morrow."

"You hear, *padre*—you hear?" exclaimed Juan breathlessly.

There was a lusty shout from the men and a cry from the women. Rosa, still holding her exquisite pose, looked full into the eyes of her *vis-à-vis* and smiled.

The next instant there was a clatter of hoofs, and the crowd scattered respectfully as Lucena, attended by Don Bernardo and Pedro Mirando, rode back from his visit to the ships. A subdued pause held the village until he was beyond its boundaries; the same hush preceded him, to fall upon the castle at his approach.

More than once, during the last month, Lucena had felt this isolation with irritable weariness; perhaps it influenced the abruptness with which he presently announced his departure to Doña Soledad's circle. But if he had expected to arouse surprise or especially interest he was disappointed. His mother acquiesced with absolute indifference, and Arria arose, as usual, to accompany him to the garden. Three weeks had made these sunset walks a matter of course, diminishing much of the latent hostility between the cousins.

"Your voyages are very long?" Arria asked rather listlessly when they were outside.

"Sometimes days, sometimes months," replied Lucena with equal coolness. "This time, I think, it will be weeks at least."

"You are going so far? Why?"

There was no one else who questioned Lucena's plans or motives, no one else whom he would have answered.

"I am going out of these southern waters. I am tired of blue skies and perfumed winds, and of the unceasing sunlight. I am going past Gibraltar into the ocean, the ocean of sweeping green and gray and flying foam; I want the wet mists and strong, sullen gales from which one wrests life, and so learns to prize it."

The half-weary, level tone robbed the words of such enthusiasm as they might have held, yet left no doubt of their sincerity. Arria did not reply until they reached the seat under the almond-tree.

"I should think you would fear such an absence," she said hesitatingly.

"Fear?"

"I mean some new trouble like the last."

Lucena's brows contracted with the old expression of pain or anger.

"You are afraid of your brother? Doña Arria, he fails in the wisdom of his race if he attempts that again. But he will not, cannot; my precautions are taken. And grant him the charity to believe he acted in madness or passion; I know he was not always so."

She leaned back, looking up at him meditatively.

"I have thought of that, *señor;* that you have considered it makes my suggestion possible. Could it not be that Gonsalvo would have accused some one whom Estevan loved; you others care so much for one another, he might have tried to shield a friend. Might it not be?"

The twig under Lucena's hand snapped, and he turned his gray eyes upon her with a blighting intensity of wrath that combined all the north and south struggling in his blood.

"Do you fancy I have not thought of that?" he demanded, with suppressed vehemence. "Do you fancy it is comfort to me to think Estevan has sacrificed me to some dearer friend? If I believed that, I give you my word of honor he should not live until to-morrow!"

Arria's eyes dilated, meeting his, and the reflection of his glance rose strangely in her fair serene face. For one moment they met beyond the borders; convent and castle alike slipped away and left two primitive creatures in recognition.

"I know!" she gasped. "I, also, should feel that. To find some one loved in your place—"

A gust of wind shook the tree and scattered the pink-and-white petals around them, one blossom catching in Arria's golden hair. She shivered at the light touch, and sank back, covering her eyes.

"God forgive me!" she murmured, terrified. "What wickedness have I said?"

Lucena himself was very pale. After an instant he bent and laid his firm hand on hers.

"The same blood runs in our veins; the same impulses leap to our thoughts; little as we understand each other, my cousin, there is no one else who can understand us half so well. When I come back we will try to learn each other better, for we are alone together."

She made no answer, and presently they walked back to where Doña Soledad drew her thread placidly in and out, waiting for them.

Next morning the ships sailed.

(To be continued.)

ONE OF THE CLEVER SUTTONS.

By Raymond S. Spears.

POPULAR sentiment approves a talented fellow who plays an unrehearsed part at short notice.

THE big corner cell of the Caine Court prison was occupied by a tall, lank mountain man who paced back and forth like a panther in a cage.

As he walked he heard men driving nails in the jail yard, with now and then the swish of a saw or the "rouching" of an auger.

"They's shore buildin' hit!" the man muttered to himself. "Hit's foh me—jes' ca'se I killed that man! Lawse! Lawse! Is a man got teh git hung foh avengin' an insult? Looks like! An' what's a man teh do—git hung like a dawg? Huh! I mout betteh git shot—um."

The north window looked down upon the main street of the little town. A hundred steps away was the gold-and-black sign of the lawyer who had defended him—and lost the case.

"That man sold me out to Blarten's relatives—he shore did!" the prisoner exclaimed. "Them Blartens allus did want to see a Sutton git hanged—an' theh's old Anse Blarten comin' in on hisn's mule now—him an' hisn's tribe! They's come teh see me git hanged! Lawse! Lawse! Wa'n't I a fool teh kill that man by day, man-fashion! I mout 'a' done hit from the bresh an' nobody'd knowed. Huh! I shore was plumb foolish, the way I done hit—yasseh!"

He stopped his pacing to watch the main street, along which men and women were coming on mules and horses. All looked toward the jail, and some pointed with knotted fingers toward the rear yard, out of the prisoner's sight, where he knew they could see a yellow frame of eight-by-eights.

The finishing touches were now being put on the structure—the platform was being nailed down and the drop-hinges screwed up. Not until dusk came did the sounds cease.

When the jailer brought the prisoner's supper—a whole baked chicken, sauces, corn pone, hot bread, and coffee in plenty—he found his prisoner smiling and apparently resigned. He sat down to watch him eat his meal.

Sutton ate slowly, muttering that it was a hearty feed for a dying man—a joke the jailer appreciated. As he ate, Sutton talked about the "doings," asking who had come to town, and if the hotels were "full up" yet.

"My folkses 'lowed they wouldn't come down till mohnin'," Sutton remarked. "They spent their las' dollah,